

PLANNING FOR A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

The purpose of an interview is to take what is written on your application and personalize that information through a conversation. The focus is on you, so be ready to discuss your interests, skills, and abilities. In preparing for an interview, it is helpful to make a list of your experiences and how you have developed and strengthened your skills. The interview is not an interrogation, so plan on playing an active part. This is a conversation to get to know you.

Dress for success

People form opinions within the first seconds of meeting someone. So, regardless of how qualified you may be, appearance can make or break an interview.

The best-dressed candidate is the one least noticed for his or her appearance. In this manner, the interviewer focuses on what is said and not on how the candidate looks. Below are some recommendations:

- Clean pressed clothing
- Conservative colors
- Clean shoes, laces tied
- Properly fitting, non-revealing clothes (i.e. no low cut tops, no exposed mid-rife, no low hanging pants)
- Hair that is clean and neat
- Brushed teeth, fresh breath
- Clean hands and fingernails
- No jeans or t-shirts

Like any other presentation, an interview has a beginning, middle, and end. The following stages give you an idea of what to expect.

Beginning

Be on time and on time means arrive ten minutes early. Do not chew gum. Introduce yourself properly and make good eye contact. Use a firm handshake and greet your interviewer by name. Stand/sit straight and avoid fidgeting.

Middle

Use the interviewer's name during the interview. Good eye contact helps convey a positive, honest image. Poor or no eye contact shows lack of interest, dishonesty or bad manners.

When answering the questions, make sure your answers are clear, concise, followed by an example, and that you maintain strong eye contact. Watch your interviewer's body language.

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Be alert for changes in behavior or lack of interest. If you sense this, you may not be answering the question or are giving long explanations when you should be brief and to the point.

Be enthusiastic. A common rule known by most salespeople is that enthusiasm for your product or service is 50% of the sale. In this case, the product you are selling is yourself. Be enthusiastic and excited about your skills, goals and what you have accomplished. This is not to be misinterpreted as being arrogant. Genuine enthusiasm is contagious and can play a huge role in an interview. Make sure to be positive, yet be yourself.

When you are explaining your 4-H experiences, be sure to include the life skills (see “Targeting Life Skills Model” on page 4) that you have improved on in addition to examples of how you grew. For example, instead of “Camp is my favorite part of 4-H because it’s a ton of fun and I learned a lot.” Try “I really enjoyed camp because I was able to make contributions to the group. When we went canoeing, we all had to work together and I enjoyed being a part of the team. I also liked camp because of how my counselor had us resolve conflicts. Instead of complaining to the counselor, we had to come to her with possible solutions for our program and she listened as we worked it out for ourselves.”

Things to be aware of that are interview turn-offs:

Know-it-all or negative attitude

Giving lots of yes/no answers without providing further descriptions.

Too loud/soft

Does not appear to be listening

Lack of self-confidence

Being too buddy-buddy with the interviewer

Ending

When the interview is drawing to a close, summarize the interview and the reasons why you are a good candidate for the trip/award. Leave the interviewers with a lasting impression! The interviewer will ask you whether or not you have any questions. This is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your interest in the trip/award. One of the biggest criticisms interviewers have of candidates is that they do not ask questions. While this in itself is not a crime, the lack of questions is often perceived as lack of interest, lack of preparation, and/or lack of focus. Write up a question or two ahead of time and bring them along with you.

What Can I Do to Prepare?

Practice! Listed are questions that may be asked in an interview, review them, spend time thinking through your responses, and schedule a mock interview with someone so that you can practice your responses. Don’t worry not all of the questions here will be asked. And also know

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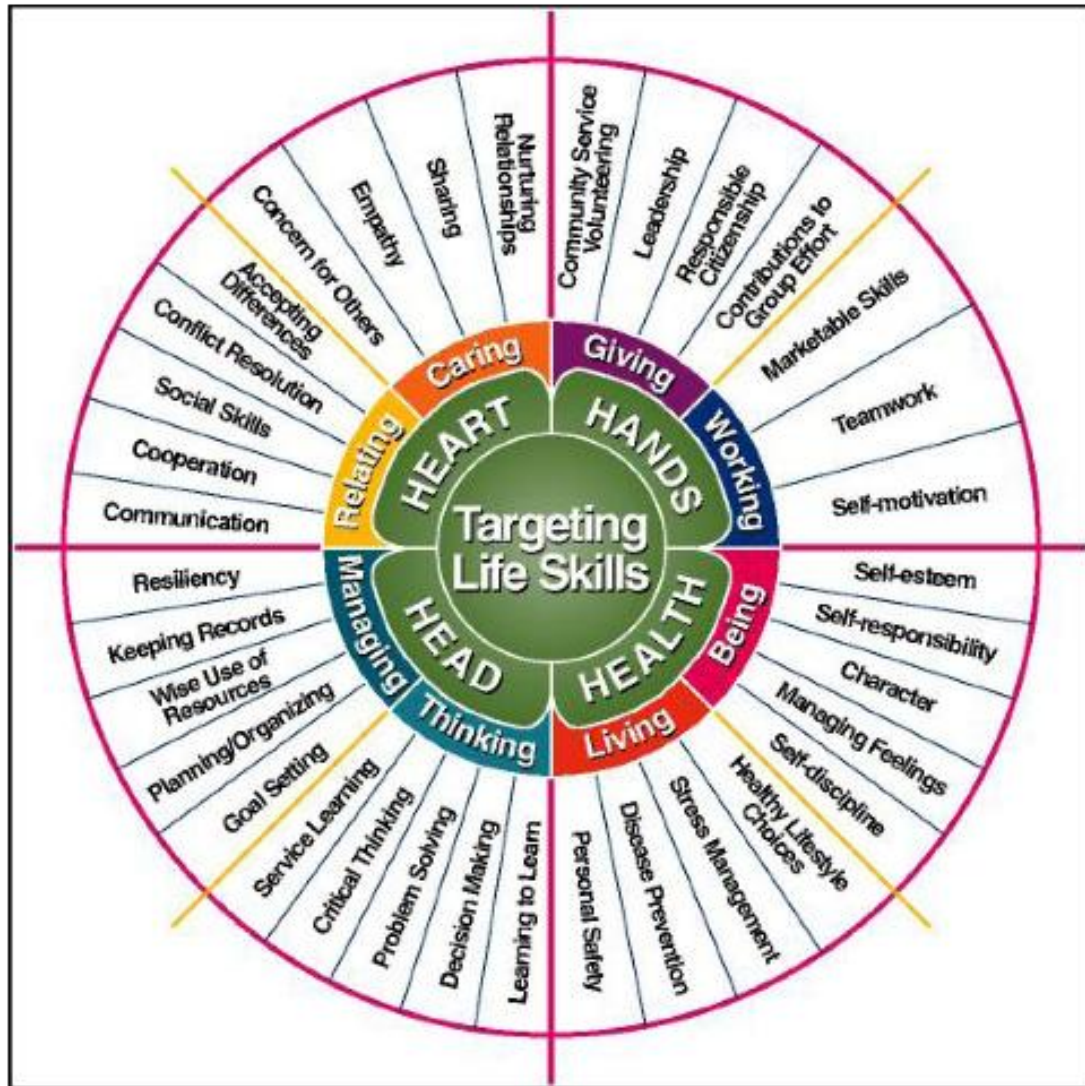


that the interviewers may ask questions that are not listed here. An interview is not like an exam; there are no right or wrong answers to questions. Relate your answers to what you are applying for and to your strengths.

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Describe a project, from start to finish, where you demonstrated leadership skills.
3. Of the courses/projects you have in school/4-H, which have you enjoyed the most?
4. Describe how your favorite course/project has contributed to your career interests?
5. How have you changed personally since starting 4-H?
6. What has been your greatest challenge?
7. Describe an idea that has come to you and what you did with it.
8. Describe a problem you solved and the process you used.
9. Give me an example of the most creative project you have worked on.
10. What job experiences/responsibilities at home have been most valuable to you and why?
11. What experience have you had in working with people? What did you learn?
12. Tell me about a difficult decision and how you went about making it.
13. How do you deal with pressure?
14. Give me a situation in which you failed, and how you handled it.
15. Why are you interested in this travel experience/award?
16. What do you contribute to 4-H?
17. How are you involved in your community?
18. What goals have you set for yourself? How are you planning to achieve them?
19. What is your most significant accomplishment to date?
20. To what do you owe your present success?
21. What motivates you?
22. What three words would people who know you well use to describe you?
23. How are you a team player?
24. Describe a situation where you had to work with someone who was difficult. How did you handle it?
25. Describe two of your best qualities/skills.
26. Why do you think you should be considered for this educational travel experience/award?
27. How could 4-H be improved?
28. What have you done to promote 4-H?
29. If selected for a trip, how would you share what you learned?
30. What else would you like to tell us about yourself?
31. Select one skill you have developed through 4-H and explain how it will help you in the future.
32. Describe a community service activity you participated in. How did you impact others by doing this activity?
33. Describe an activity that you have helped to plan and what skills you used to plan it.

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This document was modified in 2018 by Amy Mangan-Fischer, Fond du Lac County 4-H Coordinator.

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